1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

tively Sakya Muni, Guru Rimpuché (beloved teacher), or Tashey-*thing* has been equated with Tak-bo-*thing*, in Mun theology the first man and the first hero, the grandson of Itpomu, the Creative Mother, and the two change places in mythology, according to the preference of the speaker, even in stories quite unsuitable to lamaist ethics (for example in the stories of the origin of eating fish and pork, where the hero kills the original fish- or pig-devil). And the confusion does not end there; after Tak-bo-*thing* and Tashey-*thing* have been telescoped into one person they are again separated into two with two simultaneous births in different places: the Mun hero is said to have been born underground at the same moment as the lamaist saint was born in heaven.

These confusions however are more obvious to the analytical European than to the practising Lepcha. With the exception of the crucial point of killing animals the Lepchas do not appear to be conscious of the implied contradictions; and the lamas through their education in the scriptures and through the casting of horoscopes have already such a training in sophistry that they almost automatically reconcile any implicit contraditions. In by far the greater number of ceremonies for private individuals Mun and lamas perform simultaneously contradictory rites for identical ends, with the Mun usually in the 'kitchen' and the lamas in the 'parlour.' Inside the monastery precincts Mun are never allowed to practise; but in a number of the calendrical festivals on 'neutral' ground the two perform side by side. Only for one private ceremony are the Mun entirely excluded; they can take no part at all in the funeral ceremonies of a lama. On the other hand the Mun have the speciality of most of the ceremonies connected with crops and hunting and some apotropaic rites.

Theoretically there is no quarrel between the two religions, but there is a certain veiled rivalry between their priests. The lamas accuse the Mun of using their supernatural powers for unworthy private ends, for instance killing magically the spouses of people they desire so as to be able to enjoy them without interruption, and the Mun accuse the lamas of being more sensual than the average man, more dependent on constant sexual intercourse and drink; abstention is possible for the layman, intolerable for the lama. As far as drink is concerned I think the charge is justified; the amount of *chi* consumed by lamas is incalculable. As soon as they settle down for a ceremony a *patyoot* is placed beside them, and constantly refilled and renewed; the chanting—and lamaist

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DEATH

i

761 Death is the real enemy of Lepcha life. Disease and hail and failure of crops occupy the Lepchas more emotionally, for these are possibly preventable accidents and against them precautions can be taken. But death is absolute and final and cannot be fought against; some precautions can be taken against a death which has struck one member finding other victims in the community, but against death itself there is nothing to do. Death is too terrible to envisage clearly or discuss often; death, and, to a lesser extent, the dead who have suffered death are hated and feared and not talked about.

764 Once a person is dead there are two things to do; the danger of the devil that has caused his death finding another victim in the community must be averted and the dead man must be got rid of as thoroughly and completely as possible. People who have left this world never return to it benevolently; if they do have any contact with the living it is as malevolent supernaturals, as devils. The older a person grows the less likely is he to hanker after the world he has left and therefore the less he is to be feared; children and young people suddenly torn from their life will surely turn into malevolent devils.

766 The infection and danger of death is strictly local and therefore if a person dies away from home no sort of ceremony is held for him; the body is just unceremoniously thrown into the river. Why should strangers be at the expense of a funeral? No relics will be returned. When the survivors hear of the distant death of a relative they will simply set up prayer flags. They will not hold a *sanglion* (death ceremony), for if the soul has turned into a *moong* it will haunt the place where it died and will not trouble *them*. That the soul of the dear departed will not be able to find its way to the *rumlyang* (paradise) does not matter. The ceremonies

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

766 to be described later are more for a protection for the living than as a help for the dead. Only if a young child were to die away from its home would the ceremony of Dek Flee[1] be held to keep away its haunting demon.

775 It is at death and the ceremonies which surround death that the beliefs and ritual of the Mun and lamas most obviously clash
● 764 and contradict one another. Both creeds hold that the soul outside the body is lost in some dangerous region through which it must be conducted; and therefore representatives of both creeds help to conduct the soul away. But the soul's destination on these wanderings is completely different; for the lama the soul wanders for forty-nine days in a sort of purgatory, after which it is judged and rewarded and sent on to its next incarnation, whether it be on the earth as another human being or as an animal or to heaven for a period of blessedness or to hell for a period of torment. For the Mun the soul is conducted to the *rumlyang*, where it is born again as a tiny child, very often of a different sex to its former life; in the *rumlyang* the child grows up to maturity and leads a happy and immortal life among all the other dead, a life similar to that here on earth except that there is no death or disease or want.

The implicit contradictions in these beliefs are realised in the case of lamas and nuns, for whom the Mun perform no ceremonies; the souls of lamas and nuns are not led to the *rumlyang* but conducted through the *bardo* or purgatory. But for laymen ceremonies of both religions are held simultaneously; the lamas perform inside the house while the Mun does his ceremonies outside.

764 There are three alternative methods of disposing of a corpse; it may be burnt, buried, or thrown into the river. Which method
766 is adopted depends partly on the condition of the deceased and partly on the lama's horoscopes. The lamas and nuns are never buried; they are almost always burnt unless they die in the wet season, in which case their bodies are thrown into the river. Laymen are never burnt; whether they are buried or thrown into the river depends on the lama's horoscope; the greater number are buried. Young children should always be thrown into the river, but occasionally an exception is made; thus Patek's mother when she lost in rapid succession four children in infancy burnt the body of the last one in anger and as a protest at the way the supernaturals were treating her; but such behaviour is extremely uncommon.

764 As soon as a person dies the position in which he has expired

[1] Vide sub, p. 352–353.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

and the hour thereof is noted and told to a competent lama, who then consults the book, *Deyzeu*, in which are specially drawn diagrams for each calendric[illegible]ision and body position. These diagrams show in which direction the corpse should be removed for disposal; this is never on any account through the door, but may be through either the walls or the floor; a hole is made especially for this purpose which will be filled up immediately after the body has been taken away. The lama also casts the dead man's horoscope[3] from which is learnt the supernatural causes of his death and the ceremonies which must be performed by his survivors to help the dead man and ward off his fate from the living. The horoscope also indicates what sort of people—that is people born in what year—should attend to and carry the corpse and whither the devil which has caused this man's death has gone and whom it menaces next. Also if this devil has been brought by some object this object is designated so that it can receive ritual cleansing. On the day of the death of an adult and also on the day of the disposal of the body and the disposal of the ashes from the burnt paper face nobody in the village should work.

Lamas are summoned immediately after death to help the soul of the man to find heaven by giving him advice and showing to the corpse pictures of the devils and perils which he is likely to encounter. If the dead man is a lama the corpse is tied to a pole along the back; the knees are bent up to the body and held by a length of cloth; the head is propped up with a stick and the hands are joined with the palms together as in prayer. After the first day the corpse is placed in a big copper pot (after the cremation this pot is returned to its normal use after being given a thorough wash). In front of the corpse is placed a small table on which are arranged three water-containers, two dishes of rice and a *chimi*; beyond this is placed another table on which all the sorts of food which the dead man used to eat in his lifetime are placed; the food is changed at every meal and the old food is taken away and can be eaten by anyone. This preliminary ceremony lasts for one, three or seven days, according to the wealth of the deceased's family; however long the ceremony continues the lamas who are watching and instructing the dead man must not sleep at all. The others can and do sleep, often in the same room as the corpse; the corpse soon starts to stink even though it is anointed with butter mixed with cloves, nutmeg and camphor and dressed in clean clothes.

[3] See Appendix III, c.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

764 While the corpse is in the house the people of that household must not eat salt or butter.

The corpse of a layman is also doubled up in the same way, but the hands are crossed on the breast and the head is allowed to flop. The body is put in a big openwork basket. Usually for a layman there is only one day's wait between death and burial, but occasionally people will wait three days. A layman also is instructed and advised by lamas, but at the same time the Mun who will perform the *sanglion* and any other benevolent people who know how to are helping the corpse on the road to the *rumlyang* by meditation—*munthen.*

ii

764 766 Before the body of a lama or nun is carried out of the house a pyre must be prepared; this consists of a square pile about seven feet high, with eight layers of wood if the deceased is a man and nine if a woman. The pyre must be made of the wood of one of two designated trees and must not be composed of more than three trees; the first tree of all must be cut down by the nearest available male relation of the deceased. The place where the pyre is made and its direction in relation to the house of the dead man will have been indicated by the lamas' horoscope; there are about half a dozen burning and burial places around Lingthem in more or less every direction; they are all removed some way away from any habitation and are placed on uncultivable spurs of land. The hour at which the corpse should be removed and also the year of birth of the people carrying the corpse are designated by the horoscope.

The journey from the house to the pyre must be made without a break. The body is put on the pyre seated to face west—that is towards Kinchenjunga. If the dead person is a woman in an advanced state of pregnancy, just before the corpse is placed on the pyre or in the grave the body is ripped open so that the navel-cord is torn and the foetus is placed on the mother's lap. This can be done by anybody who has sufficient courage. Then all the male relations of the deceased stand at all four sides of the pyre and set fire to it simultaneously. If the corpse has left a widow or widower a portion of that person's hair is cut off and burnt at the same time as the body. It is essential that every piece of wood and bone should be burnt to ashes; if necessary the corpse will be broken up to this end. About 8 lbs. of butter, a big basket of rice and all sorts of other

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

grain are burnt with the corpse; a sort of long-handled shovel is used to make these offerings and they are thrown on to the pyre a little at a time, the officiating lama counting out loud and finishing up with a shout. The lama counts up to five ten times, up to seven five times and up to eight ten times. A pig, or very occasionally an ox, is killed at the house and this is put on to the pyre as food for the corpse after the corpse has been consumed. This animal is not usually consumed completely but merely cooked; the people who gathered the wood for the pyre are given this meat as their fee; if there is no meat they are given money. The relations of the dead man must stay by the pyre until the ashes are quite extinct.

All the unrelated people who have accompanied the family to the burning place are given a meal of rice, and a small gift of money —usually one or two annas—is given to a representative of each household present. Similar presents are also given to those who attend a burial if the mourners can afford it. On the way back from the disposal of a corpse a small bonfire is built for the mourners to jump over, and a knife or some other piece of iron is put in the doorway of the house for people to step over; both these precautions are taken to disinfect the mourners from the possible magical contagion of death.

Except that the corpse is not dressed and anointed in the house, but only when it is brought to the place designated for burial, the preliminaries for burial are exactly the same as those for burning. The corpse is carried in the basket to the burial place by one man, a near relation if possible; a husband must always carry his wife and a son his mother. As well as the friends and relations of the deceased a Mun accompanies the buriers. When the party arrive at the chosen site the corpse is placed on the ground and is washed and anointed with the mixture of butter, cloves, nutmeg and camphor, and wrapped in a new cloth which is arranged so as to cover the face. Then a circular grave about the height of a man is dug; a big stone is put at the bottom and the sides are lined with stones and four ropes are placed against the four corners. While these preparations are being made the surviving spouse or eldest son will stay by the corpse and talk to it saying: 'We are preparing this new house for you.' The body is put into the grave still sitting in the basket, orientated to face Kinchenjunga; then on the top of the grave and corpse is put a big flat stone and on the top of that four cooking stones supporting another flat stone. On the top of this is placed a little white stone which serves as an indication that the place is a

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

764 grave and should not be touched. When all is in place the four ropes are pulled away simultaneously. The Mun then ceremoniously cleanses the hands of the bearers with a pot of strained *chi* and a bristle brush.

For disposal by water all the early preparations are the same except that a lama goes with the burial party and before the body is put into the river offers *cherkem*—that is strained *chi* with grain floating in it—to the supernaturals of the water. The basket is put into the water first and then the body, head downwards; it is pushed out with a forked stick under the arm-pits and floats away. In the case of a small child the body and the basket are thrown away without any sort of ceremony. No gifts are put in the grave or thrown into the river; the corpse has merely its new cloth and the basket. In all forms of disposal of the body the knees are fastened to the body by a cloth.

iii

After the disposal of the corpse there are still two actions which must be performed: the getting rid of the devil which has caused the death and the safe conducting of the dead man's soul well out of the world. The order in which these are performed depends on whether the horoscope has divined that the death is caused by Sandé *moong*, or by Shidook *moong* or by Arot *moong* (death by violence). If the death has been caused by Sandé *moong* the disinfecting ceremony is performed immediately after the removal of the corpse and before the *sanglion*—that is to say the speeding of the dead man's soul; the other ceremonies are performed about two months after death.

764 778 To remove Sandé *moong* the presence of two lamas is necessary, one to read the sacred books and one to perform the necessary actions. On a rectangular board they construct out of powdered grain and water a life-sized Cat with a very long tail with a horse's saddle on its back and a relatively smaller rider on it; in front are two more men, behind two more. Three triple strands of coloured thread are put round the Cat's neck, one of which is held by the rider and the others by the two men in front. These images are decorated with various sacred and symbolical devices made out of wood and thread and there are offerings of crops. Besides this object, one big and two smaller torches are prepared and also some heaps of small pebbles and dried buckwheat powder, mixed with rotted bamboo (here called 'dust').

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

When all is prepared the lama reads the book Sandé Kangyour; while this is being read a layman offers *cherkem*. When the reading is finished the Cat is turned round towards the door and a path of powdered 'dust' made for it. Then the real expulsion starts. The lama throws 'dust' on to the torches to make them flare; pebbles are thrown into the corners of the room. Then all the neighbours and friends who are present take the weapons they have provided themselves with—axes, knives, hammers, or for women the heavy weaving shuttles or sickles—and start beating in every corner of the house. Others armed with the torches go round the village, or at any rate to the neighbouring houses, and some with their weapons go and beat in corners of adjoining houses. Still others accompany the Cat, which is carried a little way along a path and then upset. Should its head turn towards the house there will be another death in the village. Those who accompany the Cat whistle and shout 'Ya-Ho-o-o' and throw stones and beat around with their weapons.

If it has been found from the horoscope that the death infection was brought in some object in the house, this object is taken away with the Cat and left on the path. A couple of days later it is taken back, thoroughly cleaned and re-taken into use.

When all taking part in the devil-chasing have gone out of the house those who remain shut the door. By the door is a big copper vessel full of water from a stream with a woman beside it. After the Cat has been upset the carriers return shouting '*Hla-gélo : dé pam*' (God has conquered and the devil been defeated'). The woman will sprinkle with the water all who have gone outside; only then will the door be reopened and the people given strained *chi* which has been prepared for them by those who stayed inside.

If the death is discovered to have been caused by Shidook *moong*, the ceremony of *shidook kyop* is performed about two months after the death. For this ceremony it is necessary to kill an animal, either an ox or a goat, and the offering is made on the skin of this animal, of which the head and forelegs are left unskinned and attached. In the centre of this skin is made a 'throne' of a mound of earth in tiers, on which is placed a black 'devil's palace' or *deu* of thread; in the four corners are four small images of dough stamped with butter and decorated; below them are thirteen smaller images on stands, to which are given thirteen bamboo bows-and-arrows, thirteen knives, thirteen sickles and thirteen black 'devil's

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

764 palaces'.[3] In front of all these is placed a special plate of pottery made with nine handles; this is left empty. The ceremonial is the same as for Sandé *moong*.

If the deceased has met his death by violence, that is through Arot *moong*, the ceremony of Tikar Sangyour has to be performed. After a death by violence has occurred in a family the descendants should keep up the ceremony yearly for ever, for violent death is infectious and hereditary; it can also be performed apotropaically. The path by which a corpse, who has died violently, has been carried should be avoided; and at the *sanglion* of such people no raw meat is given, but only cooked meat, as raw meat will carry the infection. Tafoor performs this ceremony because his grandfather fell from a height and was drowned; so do Ongden, Nariya, the Mandal (although in his case this is precautionary) and many others.

764 778 On a block of wood one large and four small images of a horse with a rider are made of millet powder coloured red. In front of this is a black image of the female supernatural Mamoo *moong*, and in front of her an inflated animal's bladder. In front of this again is a *chimi* and at the four corners are four pots containing respectively scrapings of iron, tree tips, poison, and water from five rivers. There are also small offerings of grain and various decorations. While the special sacred book is being read *cherkem* is offered. When the offering is carried out a torch is laid down on top of it facing in the same direction; on top of this are placed leaves of wormwood and a stone on top of that.

764 In the case of a child dying before the age of about ten none of the ceremonies described above are performed nor is a *sanglion* made for it. Instead of these the ceremony of Dek Flee is performed by a Mun three days after death. For this ceremony a goat is required and also a tray covered with a black cloth on which is put samples of every sort of grain and a bundle of seven pieces of wood tied up with reed; besides that a bundle of elephant grass and other prickly plants are needed. The ceremony is performed inside the house.

The goat is tethered to a pole and a second rope made out of reed with three knots in it is tied round the goat's neck. This the Mun and all the members of the household in turn touch, and then the Mun throws the rope forward out of the house door three times. If by any chance the knot should point inwards there will be another

[3] Thirteen, being an odd number, is lucky.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

death in the same household. After this a young boy takes some firebrands from the hearth some way away from the house; then the goat is led to the same place, stabbed to death and singed. After this the crops on the tray are *pék* over the inhabitants of the house and set down by the goat. Then the Mun takes the bundles of leaves already prepared in his right hand and a live hen in his left and *péks* the members of the household. The hen is then given to some neighbour to kill and eat; for neither the Mun nor any members of the household may eat anything used in this sacrifice. Then the intestines of the goat are cooked and mixed with rice; the Mun throws *chi* from a buttered cup to the devils, his assistant the chopped meat and rice.

When this is finished a wooden phallus (*tiklyong-kup*) is set up between two stones on the way to the house; it is given hundreds of small cuts, each cut representing one year that the devil cannot pass. It is anointed with blood and *chi*. All that night the Mun communes—*munthen*—but he does not go into a trance. No food is given to the soul of a child. If the child was young he did not eat in real life and even if he did eat solid food, he was fed in his life time.

iv

As has been said earlier, except for the expulsion of Sandé *moong* all these ceremonies are performed several days, or weeks, after the removal of the corpse. If it is possible, however, immediately after the corpse has been disposed of the *sanglion*—the speeding of the soul—is performed. Occasionally it is necessary to wait a few days while the requisite animals and food and materials which are involved are collected, for the *sanglion* is a very expensive ceremony. At this ceremony the mourners should not eat any of the meat provided, but should give it all away. The same term, *sanglion*, is used both for the lama's and the Mun's ceremonies and if both are performed they take place simultaneously; for lamas and nuns the Mun ceremony is not performed and for laymen the lama ceremony is much abbreviated. Another controlling detail as to the date when the *sanglion* is performed is the time necessary to prepare a sufficiency of *chi*.

The lama ceremony is as follows. First of all an image of the dead person is constructed in the following way: on a mat is drawn a circle of about ten inches across of powdered grain, with nine

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

loops on the circumference[4] and NI in Tibetan script inscribed in the middle. On this is set a bamboo *patyoot* about a cubit high and a little broader than that usually employed for *chi* drinking, with a rupee in the bottom and filled with grain; into this is stuck an upright bamboo of the height of the corpse when sitting and at shoulder height is an inserted cross-piece the width of the dead person's shoulders. On top of this is placed a piece of paper supported on a square stretcher: this is stamped with a die representing a divine face; it is the same for all ages and conditions, but different for each sex; it is inscribed with the name of the dead person. Then this dummy is clothed with the clothes of the dead person so arranged as to look as if it was sitting with the legs crossed and feet hidden and hands folded. A big scarf which has to be borrowed or bought for the occasion is draped from the image's behind up the back and over the face, so that the paper mask is hidden.

This image is placed in the *dé-ong* facing the lamas, who sit on the right of the altar; in front of the image are three tables. On the first table are seven small cones of rice, seven *chimi*, two pots of water and two pots of rice; on the second table is a plate and cup and all sorts of food; on the third are the dead person's jewels, if it was a woman, or the knife and bow-and-arrows if a man. A little to the left before the first table is a *patyoot* of *chi*; behind and also to the left must sit the Mourner—the surviving spouse if there is one, or failing that any near relation. The Mourner only has to be present when the image is given food or talked to. Except right at the end other ordinary people do not come into the *dé-ong*.

If the dead man was a lama all the lamas of the neighbourhood will come automatically; if he was a layman only two are necessary, a Dorjé Lapoon and a *kané*. Old and experienced men are allowed to sit with the lamas. A certain number of nuns with their prayer-wheels are necessary; they sit against the wall opposite the altar.

[556] The length of the ceremony depends on the wealth of the deceased. If he was a poor man it will only last twenty-four hours; if he was rich, up to seven days. The *chi* offered to the corpse is changed three times daily, the food twice; each meal must have some meat in it and also tea, rice and all vegetable foods. When the meal

[4] There would seem to be a connection between this nine-looped circle, and the nine-handled cup used in the ritual to expel Shidook *moong*, but I could not learn what this connection is.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

is presented to the image the lamas address it, saying: 'Do not think of this world; we are giving you all the food you used to eat when you were alive; take it and *go.*' On these occasions the Mourner must be present. When the food in front of the image is removed it is eaten by those present who are not of the immediate family of the deceased; it is not thought to have lost any virtue or to be in any way dangerous. 764

The lamas have to read five sacred books; all read the same passage at the same time. Simultaneously there are six books which the nuns should read; those who cannot read turn their prayer-wheels. The whole time the reading is going on the lamas and nuns must not sleep; they may at intervals go outside for a respite, but they must never settle down to sleep. If all the books have to be read in a day and a night they have to hurry; if there is more time, they can go more leisurely; if the books are finished they start again at the beginning. The family, other than the Mourner, and their friends spend their time in the kitchen eating and drinking and talking and sleeping.

When the reading is finished all the relations gather. A specially clean plate is placed in front of the Dorjé Lapoon. Then the Dorjé Lapoon addresses the soul of the dead man telling it that everything has been done for it and that it has found its way to paradise, and then the *kané* takes off the paper head and hands it to the Dorjé Lapoon who holds it in his left hand; in his right he holds a big *chimi* and lights the paper from the bottom so that the ashes fall on to the plate. While the paper is burning all present shout 'Hep' three times in a loud voice, which signifies that the soul has got to heaven. The *kané* prepares a ball of reed ash mixed with water; the paper ashes are inserted therein and then placed in a *choten* mould into which a little oil has been poured. The ashes are rammed down and taken out in the form of a small *choten.* This *choten* the Dorjé Lapoon sprinkles with holy water (*tyü*); after which a hole is made in the bottom of the ash *choten* with a stick and a few grains of rice are pushed in and a gold and silver ornament are symbolically scraped with a knife over it. This *choten* is placed on the altar. In the case of ordinary people it is taken away the next day by the head of the household and put either in the river or in a cave or on a rock. If, however, the deceased was a lama of exceptional holiness a big stone *choten* will be made; some of the dust from his bones from the funeral pyre are placed in the foundations and the small *choten* is put in the centre.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

764 When the ceremony is finished the clothes of the deceased are divided among the lamas; the Dorjé Lapoon gets the best coat and the *omzets* the other garments. Before these are worn the lama will hold some mustard seeds in his hand and pray silently; he will then throw the seeds on the clothes; this is considered sufficient disinfection; after that the garment is washed and can then be worn or sold. In the case of a dead lama his skull-drum and bell goes to the Dorjé Lapoon and his rosary to the officiating *kané*; the *kané* also gets the *patyoot* with the rupee and grain inside, the dead man's plate and cup, and the big scarf which covered the face of the image. At a lama's *sanglion* the nuns are given a rupee a head and a maund of grain between them, and the lamas are given Rs. 20 and three maunds of grain to divide. For a layman's *sanglion* the gifts are usually considerably less.

The day after the *sanglion* is finished the place where the body was disposed of is visited by some near relations of the deceased to see if there are any footprints in the near neighbourhood which would indicate that the dead man had reincarnated as an animal. The footprints of cats, dogs and tigers do not indicate reincarnation; they merely show that a devil has passed by in this form, and I never heard any actual incident of the prints of any other animal being discovered.

If everything consumed in this *sanglion* were paid for in cash it would represent an expense of over Rs. 200, for a continuous feast with meat has to be provided for all present. If the survivors are poor everybody will bring contributions of money and food. The ceremony is absolutely necessary to free the soul of the dead man [775] from devils and lead it to heaven. Were it omitted the soul would wander miserably on earth, doing harm to the survivors, and eventually reincarnating as a worm or some noisome insect or beast of prey.

Money should be distributed to the monasteries in the name of the dead man; if he was a poor man it need only be given to the three monasteries of Zongu, but if he was rich to the monasteries all over Sikkim.

It is considered desirable that the Mun *sanglion* should take place on the same day as the disposal of the corpse. If, however, the lamas' *sanglion* is postponed that of the Mun may be also. Very few Mun know how to perform the death ceremony; in Lingthem the only one who knew how to was old Pumri and she was never employed as it was not considered suitable for a woman to perform

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

the ceremony. Usually an old Mun from a village farther up the valley was summoned for the purpose. Gongyop said that he knew how to, but he was lazy and did not want to perform the ceremony and therefore did not get his qualification (*loong*).

Before the Mun comes out of his house to perform the ceremony he will spend the night communing and calling on the gods to help him conduct the soul to heaven; in particular he will call on Hit-*rum* and Dé-*rum*, the ancestral gods, and such ancestors of the deceased as have died in the same way as the present man. The Mun is accompanied by a friend or assistant called Mun-tyol.

After the funeral a pig is killed and one of its trotters is put aside on a wooden tray for the ceremony. The following articles—all very small—are also prepared inside the house and put on the tray: two ladders made out of the wood used for arrows, which are placed on either side of a tiny log, two small torches, one dish of rice mixed with charcoal and pebbles, a comb and a bristle brush. There is also prepared separately a rope of bamboo bark about twelve feet long and also 80 lbs. of *chi*, 40 lbs. of rice, and strained *chi* in a filtering bag. When all is prepared everybody in the house goes outside into the yard, except the lamas who stay inside reading their books. First of all the Mun takes the knife of the deceased (or, if the corpse was a woman, her sickle) and starts cutting the weeds in the courtyard. If there are many weeds others will help after the Mun has started. When the space is cleared the mourners have a meal; the Mun sits aside and is merely given *chi* to drink. An animal, preferably an ox, is brought in and offered to the devils who are plaguing the dead man's soul in order to induce them to desist; then the ox is killed by some unrelated layman and skinned and cut up. The intestines are boiled.

While the ox is cooking a shed is made for the Mun out of bamboo mats suspended from a post; to this post the cooked intestines are tied. (These are taken away in the morning by the Mun-tyol.) A little way in front of this is another post of a special sort of wood to which is attached the rope of bamboo bark; two knots are tied in it, the one nearer the post being for the devils, the farther one for the gods. The other end of this rope is held during the whole ceremony by the Mun and is finally severed with a pointed knife after the Mun has communicated with the dead.

The household sends out to the Mun a dish of boiled rice and a portion of the ox's ribs cut in two—one part for the Mun and the other for the Mun-tyol—and also black and white sausages.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

764 Generally the Mun only eats the rice, the meat being taken away in the morning with the other presents.

There is also prepared a dish of all the sorts of food—dried bird and fish, ginger, different sorts of grain and fruits and roots and *chi*—that the deceased used to eat.

When everything is ready the Mun retires to the shed with his assistant. The rest of the people sit around but not so near that they can hear what is going on. Before retiring the Mun puts on a special headdress of white cloth arranged like a turban with in the centre porcupine quills and tigers' whiskers and at the side peacock's feathers. The Mun now starts to *munthen* and calls on the dead man's soul, always holding the rope in the left hand. When he has got into communication with the dead man he starts giving him advice and help. When the Mun starts talking to the soul of the deceased the Mun-tyol sends for the tray which was prepared in the house and these objects are given to the soul by means of throwing them out of the shed (no notice is taken of them after) with instructions how to use them. First the soul is given the rice with the charcoal and pebbles in it; he is told to eat the rice and leave the charcoal and stones; the devils, pursuing and hungry, will pick over the stones for food and give him time to escape. Then he is given the ladders and torches to help him. With their aid he will be able to climb over the log which will block the way of the devils. He is also told to throw behind him the brush and comb which will grow into huge fences and block the devils' way.

Now the dead man's soul is coming near; when the Mun-tyol sees the signs that it is approaching he sends for the collection of food which has been prepared and this is offered to the dead man with the words: 'All these foods which you used to eat when you were alive you can have now.' Then suddenly the Mun 'dies'; he falls and his assistant catches him. The Mun's soul has departed from his body and in its place is the soul of the dead man who speaks through the Mun's lips: he speaks very slowly and in a very soft voice; it is not the voice of the Mun nor is it the voice of the dead man.[5] The Mun-tyol will then question the dead man, saying: 'Tell us what devils are troubling you; tell us how you died.' Then the dead man will say the cause of his death, whether it was caused directly by a devil or whether it was through

[5] Gongyop said that this possession is not so complete as the prophetic possession described by him in Chapter Eight; the dead man's soul does not enter the body of the Mun but 'sits on his shoulders'.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

the intervention of some human enmity, either *mik-jit* (envy and cursing) or the direct sending of a devil.[6]

When the dead man has said what was the cause of his death he leaves the body of the Mun, who recovers and cuts the rope between the two knots, so that the devil's knot is left attached to the post, with the pointed knife that he has held in his right hand all the time. He then conducts the soul to the *rumlyang*, where all the dead live; he will find there a house prepared with bedding and all utensils; he will lead the soul into it and lock it in. This ends the Mun *sanglion* and in the morning the Mun goes home, taking with him his presents; they consist of the meat already mentioned, a leg of beef, Rs. 5 (or at any rate Rs. 3), the dead man's knife, or sickle, and one complete set of his clothes. These he wears or gives to his wife. The rest of the dead man's clothes are divided up among the children six months after death; they are washed three times and fumigated with incense before wearing. No danger is attached to them. The dead man's name is used for the ceremony and is not avoided afterwards.

It will be more convenient to finish the description of the Mun's ceremony here. One year after the original *sanglion* the Mun will go into a trance again, though an even lighter one this time, and visit the *rumlyang* once more. Outside the house in which the soul of the dead man is enclosed Hit-*rum* will be standing on guard; for him will be offered presents of *chi* and butter and sugar-cane and fruits and flowers and roots of many different sorts. After this the Mun unlocks the door of the house and finds a little baby inside; to this baby he presents a dress suitable to its sex. (The Mun is provided with two cloths, one for a boy and one for a girl, as it is by no means certain into which sex the dead person will reincarnate.) When the Mun has opened the door the baby comes outside and lives with the other people in the *rumlyang* who are his ancestors; the baby will grow up as human beings do and when

[6] I asked whether, if the death was caused by human agency, the survivors ought to try to take any revenge? The answers were somewhat confused (a) No, they should not because they could not be certain that it is true. (b) If they were not able to deal with the devil before it caused the man's death they would not be able to deal with it after. While the man was alive they should try and send the devil back to the original sender. (c) They can try to please the devil which has caused the death by giving it presents and induce it to return and smite the sender. I raised this point with several people and the general feeling was that revenge could not and should not be attempted. The greater number of people were surprised at my suggesting it.

1:Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

764 the Mun visits the *rumlyang* in future years he will see the soul grown to be an adult. There is no death in the *rumlyang*, but when I pointed out the contradiction of there being no death for the souls with the lamaist belief that the soul is reincarnated on earth, a compromise was reached by stating that the soul would die in the *rumlyang* if it were going to be reincarnated on this earth.

v

765 On the third day after the Sandé Kangyour or after the *sanglion* —according to which comes first—one Mani prayer-flag is erected ; on the twenty-first day a second is erected ; and on the forty-ninth as many as can be afforded up to the number of one hundred and eight. The cost of a single prayer-flag for the dead[7] is reckoned to be about a rupee ; the person setting it up provides the cloth and any competent lama can stamp it with the die which is kept in the monastery. The flag is inscribed with the most usual name of the person in whose intention it is erected written in Tibetan script. One flag for each dead person is usually set up in the monastery precincts, either the one put up on the third or twenty-first day. This prayer-flag is sanctified by a lama, usually the Dorjé Lapoon, reading a sacred book over it and sprinkling it with holy water (*tyū*), while a boy stands by holding two *chimi* on a plate ; it is set up with a shout and afterwards a procession of lamas, nuns and mourners walk round it and the monastery turning their prayer-wheels and chanting *Om ! mani pudme hum !* After the circum-ambulations are finished the whole procession prostrate themselves three times before the flag and touch the post first with their prayer-wheels, and then at a lower place with their foreheads.

The other prayer-flags set up outside the monastery precincts (they may be erected at the place where the corpse was disposed of or by his old home) are erected without any ceremony and may be put up by any layman. It is believed that the life of a prayer-flag will be proportionate to that of the person in whose intention it is erected ; a flag for a young person will be soon tattered and torn, while that for an old person will last longer. It is permissible for anybody to dismantle a ragged prayer-flag, but it is rather unwise for a person unrelated to the setter-up to do so ; for the setter-up might not consider it completely worn out, and in that case the

[7] Prayer flags for the living are slightly smaller and therefore less expensive ; there are two dies for these but only one for the benefit of the dead.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

765 mourners dispersed they wiped their eyes and appeared soon after
152 to be in normal spirits. It seemed almost as though they were trying to hide their grief.

761 All the elaborate ceremonies which I have described are per-
764 formed to get rid of the dead; the dead are terrifying and should be feared, not loved. Death has no consolations.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

After the Lama had gone away the uncle put the corpse into a basket. When Karma saw this he cried out and asked what had happened to his father. He tried to get into the basket with him, but his mother pulled him away: "It is no longer your father," she said, "he has now turned into a Mung."

The following morning Karma's uncle again came to the house, and took up some of the floor-boards. Many people now gathered at the house. One man took a burning fire-brand and got down through the hole which had been made in the floor. His uncle followed and others dragged the basket containing the corpse towards the hole. It was lowered to the ground and then the uncle hoisted it on to his shoulders and carried it away. Other people followed, some carrying the deceased's bow and arrows, and also his bamboo arrow-holder. Now they all moved off, one man walking in front with the lighted brand. Later on the party returned to the house and Karma wondered why his father was no longer with them. When they were approaching a big fire was lighted on the path outside, over which they all passed. Then a knife was brought and placed upon the door-step by Karma's uncle. Everybody stepped over this before entering the house. Later on they all went away and the house was very quiet. Karma wondered why his mother cried so much.

Karma's parents were always very poor; they did not own even a single goat or cow. He remembers his uncle once bringing a goat to the house, but cannot remember it being slaughtered. It was very good to see the meat, and he hoped he would be given some to eat. But his mother told him not to touch it, and this made him feel very angry. After her husband's death, Karma's mother gave birth to two more children. One was born three months later; but the other was a bastard. Its father was a man named Takor; but he denied paternity and refused to accept any responsibility in the matter. He behaved in the same way with another woman, by whom also he had a child. Some months after his father's death Karma was playing outside the house when a

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

he said that while there was no particular harm in other people catching sight of his beads he must never discuss them, except with other Padim or Mun. If he did the god would be angry and refuse in future to help him: moreover, he was in the habit of using this particular rosary to determine the outcome of his love affairs. If he talked about it there was a chance that it might play him false! And so he begged to be excused. As he said this he tucked it away, well out of sight.

It is believed that when a Mun dies his soul returns to its celestial home, where it changes into the god Hit, the guardian of which is Pong Rum, the patron of all hunters. The body is always buried and not treated in any special way. Even the soul like that of ordinary people needs direction after death, or it will not know which road to take. A Mun must be careful never to touch a corpse. If he did so his god would leave him for the time being, and he would be ill for at least two months. There is no harm in his looking upon a dead body; nor will anything ensue if he touches the bodies of dead animals. Should he happen by mistake to touch a corpse he must get a Lama to cleanse his body with consecrated water, at the same time burning incense in the room while this is being done. After this he will regain his powers; but nothing, it may be noted, can cause the god permanently to desert the Mun.

In cases of illness in Lingtem a Lama is always called in first. He decides what treatment is necessary and then arranges accordingly. As a matter of fact, I cannot remember attending any ceremony, apart, of course, from purely religious festivals, at which a Lama and Mun were not both officiating; a regular Harley Street conspiracy!

In addition to Lamas and Muns, Lepchas also have recourse to people known as Nunjimu. This word does not appear in the dictionary: but the verb *Nun* (from which the word is presumably derived), which is Tibetan, is given as meaning "to be insensible, or cataleptic." These people are not nowadays often employed, and in Lingtem there was only one. According to Gongyop the original Nunjimus

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

ANCIENT FUNERAL CEREMONIES OF THE LEPCHAS

R. NEBESKY DE WOJKOWITZ

177 The teachings and rites of the Unreformed School of Tibetan Buddhism—nowadays the dominant creed in the Sikkim State—have deeply influenced the beliefs and religious practices of the Lepchas, the main group of aboriginal inhabitants in the Sikkim area. In the course of four centuries, which passed since the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism into Sikkim,[1] the original Lepcha traditions became so closely intermingled with ideas and customs of Tibetan origin,[2] that it is now a most difficult task to separate these two groups from each other; this state is still more complicated by the fact that the Lepchas accepted—even if only in a smaller degree—also some of the traditions and customs of the neighbouring Mangars, Limbus,[3] Nepalese and Bhutanese. Among many other customs also ideas concerning the human soul, death and its causes, life after death, etc., as well as the funeral ceremonies themselves were greatly changed under Tibetan influence. Thus the belief in a judgement of the soul by the Lord of the Dead, *Cho ge pä no*[4] (Tb. *Chhos kyi rgyal po*), the migration of the soul through the perils of the *Bar do*[5] (Tb. *Bar do*)—the stage between death and new life—and its rebirth in one of the "six worlds", the punishment of sinners in hell or *Nyó lyang* (Tb. *dMyal ba*), and other well known theories of Tibetan Buddhism are therefore today [764] widely spread among the Lepchas. Oral tradition, however, preserved accounts of the early Lepcha customs and in some of the remote, scarcely accessible valleys of Sikkim the old funeral rites are said to be still observed.

774 According to the old Lepcha belief,[6] the soul[7] is given to a human being by *Fă gróng thíng* and his wife *Nă zóng nyo*, the ancestors of the 775 Lepcha race,[8] at the moment of birth. *Nă zóng nyo*, who is also responsible for the conception, determines of which sex the child is going to be. The place from which the soul comes and to which it again returns after a man's death, is called *Rŭm lyang*, "the place of gods". It is believed, that this place lies somewhere in the hills, close to Mount Kanchenjunga.[9] The soul, once it has returned to the *Rŭm lyang*, will stay there with the spirits of the ancestors and not reincarnate in this world again. It also will not have to undergo any punishment for the sins, which the deceased might have committed during his lifetime.

At the time of birth, the soul is believed to be very small, but later on it becomes gradually bigger, keeping pace with the growth of the body. The soul of a living being is called *A pil* and it

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

changes at the moment of death into a spirit, named *Mŭk nyam*; this change itself is termed *Hyit*. The *A pil* is said to get scared very easily and when frightened can even leave the body; the separation of the soul from the body results however in the instantaneous death of the human being. To protect small children from this danger, mothers often fasten round the neck or armwrist of the child a string with a snail shell on it, "as refuge for the soul".[10]

Illness and death are attributed by the Lepchas to a number of malignant demons who have to be propitiated by various ceremonies, in order to prevent their attacks or to rescue a victim from their influence. Among the host of these evil supernaturals, whose names and spheres of influence vary with the traditions of the different parts of the Lepcha land, there are some who are believed to be especially dangerous as they do not satisfy their greed by harming people through illness, but who try either to eat man's flesh or to destroy his soul. A few of these supernatural beings, as *Sang grong mung*, *Dŭt mung* and his wife *Sŭ mo mung*, etc. who seem to have been at one time widely known and feared among the Lepchas, are believed to have vanished since man started clearing the jungle and to settle even in the remotest parts of Sikkim.

Sang grong mung and his wife,—the supernaturals of the Lepchas mostly appear in pairs—are said to have been half men and half apes. Their abode were deep, dark caverns in the hills. They lived on human flesh and to satisfy their hunger they often tried to get people into their power by offering them presents. The person, who had met the *Sang grong mung* or his consort, had no other choice than to accept the gift; however, he had to take it with the back of his hands and not with the palms as customary, otherwise his life was lost.

Dŭt mung and his wife *Sŭ mo mung*—who was always accompanied by her servant *Sŭ mo thor*—had children and they lived in a house, just like men. Their hunting ground was the jungle, where they killed lonely travellers and ate their flesh. *Sŭ mo mung*, who was an ugly ogre with long matted hair and emaciated breasts, is said to have been very fond of seducing young men. To achieve her aim, she could change herself—by brushing her hair back and rubbing her body—into a lovely girl. She induced her victim, to follow her to her house, where she killed and devoured him; but sometimes, if she liked the man, she kept him with her for some time, hiding him from her jealous husband.

Another demon, frequently held responsible for the death of a person, is *Mă zóm mung*, who is said to appear in the form of a huge black dog with ferociously gleaming eyes and a flaming mouth. To

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

prevent this evil spirit from returning to a house, where he had just caused a death, the mourners on their way back from the funeral put hedges of thorns across the road, to prevent *Mă zóm mung* from following them. In some localities it is the custom to scare *Mă zóm mung* away by heating during the night after the funeral three huge stones on the hearth. The stones are later brought into the open and somebody of those present calls the name of this demon, asking him to come and eat some meat. The demon, who is believed to be very greedy, comes immediately and tries to swallow the stones, but he burns himself badly and runs away.

Shom mung is a malignant spirit, who causes people to commit suicide or murder. He creeps close to a man from the back and then suddenly enters his mind and taking possession of his victim, forces him ultimately to commit the evil deed. This demon is also held responsible for all accidental death.

A soul, which was captured by *Shom mung*, is unable to proceed to the other world unless it had been freed by a *Mŭn* from the power of the evil spirit. To perform this ceremony, a *Mŭn* has to come in the evening after the funeral to the victim's house. On this occasion, the *Mŭn* is wearing a red dress, with a head-band of the same colour. At the beginning of the ceremony, an animal is killed and its blood collected in a big, flat vessel in order to attract the bloodthirsty spirit. The *Mŭn* then takes her place in front of this vessel and goes into a trance. After some time she suddenly declares that *Shom mung* has entered the container and she throws now into the blood a grass whisk, which she had held ready in her right hand. Leaving the whisk in the vessel —"to keep the demon down"—she grasps a flat stick made from *Nyol hung*[11] wood, which is lying at her right side, and begins to beat frantically the surface of the blood pool, in order to "kill the demon". All those present, shouting and screaming, join her in this beginning, using sticks, stones and knives as weapons. After a while, the *Mŭn* takes the vessel outside the house and pours its contents into a hole, which had been dug previously in the compound, and then all weapons which were used during the ceremony, are also thrown into the pit, which is quickly closed. Only when this ceremony had been performed for somebody, who had fallen victim to *Shom mung*, can his *Mŭk nyam* be guided afterwards in the usual way to the *Rŭm lyang*. It is believed, that unless *Shom mung* is killed, he will become attached to the family which had omitted the rite just described, and he will kill its members one by one.

Another pair of dangerous supernaturals are the demon *Thing mung* and his wife *Nyo mung*, who are able to bring a man's life

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

to an end by cutting his "thread of life".

There are however also some spirits, who guard people against the attacks of malignant demons. Among these benevolent supernatural beings, the *A bo a mo să rŭm*, who protect the family and who transfer their protective power from one generation to the other, and *Mŭn kung*, the guardian spirit of life, should be mentioned.

At the moment of death, soul and body, as the Lepchas believe, separate and the soul leaves its temporary abode. At first it lingers in the room for some time, watching the lifeless body. But later, feeling very light as it is not kept down anymore by the heavy human form, it leaves the room and strolls further and further away from the house. It goes now to all the places, which the deceased had visited during his lifetime, and it tries to speak to people it meets on the road, but nobody can hear or see the roaming soul. If no appropriate measures are taken, it might get friendly with the demons and induced by them, can return and start harming people. To prevent this, a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn*[11] have to be called, to say the necessary prayers and invocations. The prayers start with an admonition to the deceased to realize, that his life has now come to an end and that he is not among the living anymore.

When performing this rite or any other funeral ceremony, a *Mŭn* has to be very careful not to touch the corpse and also not to take any food in front of the dead, otherwise she would be afflicted by a severe illness. There are however no such restrictions for the *Bong thing*. If no Lepcha sorcerer is to be found in the neighbourhood, anybody who knows the necessary prayers may be called into the house. Also in case that a *Bong thing* or a *Mŭn* died, this rite has to be performed, only in a more elaborate manner.

Those funeral ceremonies of the Lepchas,[12] which had to be carried out at daytime, were called *Sŭng bam*, while those which took place at night were termed *Sŭng lyon*. The cost of these rites was considerable and thus it occured frequently that people had to sell or pawn some of the family property in order to fulfil their duty towards the dead.

When preparing the corpse for the funeral, all jewellery as earrings and rings had to be removed and then the body was washed with lukewarm water ; to use cold water was not customary, as "during lifetime, one would also not offer cold water for washing". Later the body was smeared with some herbs and dressed in an old, but clean garment. To use a new, unworn dress is a custom, which came into vogue only in more recent times among well-to-do Lepcha families. At last the face of the dead was covered with a white cloth and a coin was placed

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

on the forehead to be presented by the spirit to *Fă grŏng thing*, the male ancestor of the Lepchas. A half seer of riee was measured, wrapped in a piece of cloth and placed at the side of the dead, "to serve as food on the road"; while in common life always a heaped measure is taken, in this case the measure is linear.

The corpse was taken out of the house by an opening, which had been made either in a wall or in the floor, as the dead was not supposed to leave his former residence by the door. After the corpse had been brought into the open, it was placed on a bamboo stetcher or—according to Tibetan custom—its legs were bent, the knees drawn towards the chin and then fastened in this position with a band. In the latter case, the body was ultimately placed into an old basket and then carried on the back by anybody strong enough, to the cemetery. The top of the basket was usually covered with a piece of nice, embroidered cloth, which however was not burried along with the dead.

Today, in consequence of Tibetan influence, the dead are burnt on pyres and the ashes immerged in a river. The Sikkimese lamas, who introduced this custom, claim that by burning a dead one certainly avoids his soul becoming the victim of a malignant spirit and thus the old rites of freeing a soul from the power of a demon or the recalling of the *Mŭk nyam*, which were formerly performed by a *Mŭn*, became unnecessary. Nowadays, the majority of the Lepcha people burn their dead and only in a few very remote places some of the old funeral customs, like the recalling of the *Mŭk nyam*, are still practised. Mostly however, lamas are called today into the house to conduct the necessary ceremonies and to guide the soul on the way to the other world, as prescribed by the Buddhist religion; very frequently however also a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* are fetched to say simultaneously some prayers according to Lepcha tradition.

In former times, very elaborate funeral ceremonies were performed and it was customary, to bury the dead in graves. Some details of these ceremonies as well as the form of the grave varied with the different clans and localities.

It seems, that at least three different types of grave were developed by the various Lepcha clans:[14]

(a) The *cŏk*, a pit-grave with a circular base; the dead was placed in this grave either in a reclining or erect position, his face turned towards Mt. Kanchenjunga.

(b) A pit-grave called *cŏk den*,—with a square base—into which the corpse was put in erect position and facing Kanchenjunga.

(c) An oblong grave, the *cŏk bli*, in which the dead was buried in a reclining position, turned in the same manner as before,

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

764 On top of each grave a small hillock was made, with a tombstone (*cók bum*) in the middle; the grave thus marked was called *cók de*. The inside of the pit was carefully laid out with stones, so that the earth would not touch the corpse. The reason, why the dead were always turned towards Mt. Kanchenjunga was that they "should see the mountain, from which the Lepchas originated."

According to the custom of various localities, people were either buried in single graves, which were made in the fields, the jungle or—more frequently—close to a river, or on cemeteries, called *cók bróng lyang* or *cók bram lyang*. While the single graves were mostly destroyed in the course of time, the site of the ancient cemeteries is still [766] often remembered.—Children below the age of ten were buried without the full ceremonial. Women, who died together with their child in childbirth, were buried jointly in one tomb.

When the funeral procession reached the freshly dug grave, the corpse was lowered into the pit and then, according to local custom, various things were laid near the dead. Besides the half seer of rice and the coin for *Fă gróng thing*, a bow and arrow were placed at the side of a man, or sometimes his knife (*ban*), the indispensable instrument of every Lepcha man. To a girl, her comb, and to a woman her sickle were given. Then a rope made of bamboo tissue and consisting of two parts, linked together with a loose sling, was lowered by a *Bong thing*, *Mŭn*, or a close relative into the grave. Shortly before the pit was closed, the person who held the rope called the deceased by his name, telling him that his "life spirit" is now being removed and that he should keep away from the living and not try to harm them; then he pulled hard on the rope, so that the sling opened and the lower half of the rope fell into the pit.

In order to close the grave, at first some stones were arranged in a kind of roof also above the basket, so that the corpse was surrounded now from all sides by a stone wall. Then earth was pilled up, to form a small hillock and above the head of the dead, the tombstone was set. When heaping up this hillock, great care was taken to make its surface as smooth as possible, because three days after the funeral the relatives had to return to the grave, to see whether there were any traces on the [787] hillock. If imprints of human feet were seen, it was regarded as a sign that the spirit of the dead had walked around the grave, but if traces of any animal were found, it was believed that they were left by the demon, who had caused the man's illness and death.—Then a grass whisk was taken and a magic circle was drawn with it around the tomb, to prevent any other soul from entering it. In some localities, if a man was buried, a "wild boars nest" —a small shelter in form of a nest, as made

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

by wild boars during the rainy season—was erected with the help of some twigs and dry leaves, the idea probably being, that this nest should provide a temporary shelter for the *Mŭk nyam* who according to the belief of some Lepcha clans, stays for seven days on the burial ground. When a woman died, a small hand-loom was sometimes placed near the tomb.

After closing the grave, an egg was broken on the tombstone and some rice as well as a bamboo container filled with Lepcha beer (*ci*) were placed on the hillock as a food-offering for the dead. Then all tools which were used for digging the pit were beaten against each other for a while and at last all the wooden handles of these instruments were removed and piled up near the grave, while only the iron parts were kept to be used again.

When returning from the funeral, the mourners had to put up obstacles—as already mentioned before—to hinder the demon *Mă zóm mung* from following them. When reaching the house, everybody who had attended the funeral had to undergo a ritual purification. To this purpose an ox was killed and some of its blood was poured into a vessel and strained with water; the right foreleg of the sacrificed animal was laid aside, to be used in the ceremony which commenced after darkness had fallen, while the rest was prepared as food for the guests. Then a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* entered the house, in which the death had occurred and performed its cleansing, going into every room and sprinkling in all corners some of the ox blood, with the help of a whisk made of nine different kinds of grass. Then all foodstuff which had lain close to the dead, had to be removed and at last everybody before entering the house had to be purified by waving the grass whisk over his head; this action was known as *Phĭk* or *A phĭk*.

During the night the ceremony of "recalling the *Mŭk nyam*" had to be performed and in some of the more outlying localities this rite is sometimes still practised. Only a *Mŭn* can perform this rite. In former times, before starting her invocations, the *Mŭn* had to walk in the evening to the grave and beat several times with a stick against the tombstone. Returning to the house, she took her seat with the back to a wall and facing the door; it was regarded as auspicious, if she could face in this position Mt. Kanchenjunga.

Then the right foreleg of the ox, which had been prepared previously, was placed in a basket and brought into the room. Only the upper part of the leg was used, while the part from the knee downward was cut away. The basket was set near the *Mŭn* and a rope wound around the joint of the leg, while the other end was fastened with a

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

loose sling to the little finger of the *Mŭn's* left hand. In her right hand she took a knife, as weapon against evil spirits.

After these preparations had been finished, the *Mŭn* works herself gradually into a slight trance, and with a high, loud voice she begins her incantations. She calls upon the *Mŭk nyam* to recognize, that he belongs from now on to the world of the dead, and that he should not hide in trees, stones, rivers, lakes or fire, but he should join the soul of the *Mŭn* for a tour of the Lepcha land. The *Mŭn* sings now for hours a long, rhymed account, the text of which she had learned by heart from her teacher during the time of initiation. She describes to the spirit the beauty of Sikkim, its snow mountains, valleys, rivers and lakes, the forests, fields and lonely dwellings of men. At last, the *Mŭn* guides the spirit down the Teesta River and describing the source of this greatest river of Sikkim, she conducts the *Mŭk nyam* across the Indian plains, "to show it the ocean". But she admonishes the deceased, that he should not gaze too long at the endless sea, as he has to return with her that very night to the Lepcha land. Then again the *Mŭk nyam* is led to the Teesta and following the river upstream, the *Mŭn* guides the spirit back to the house, from which they started the journey.[18]

In the early morning, when the darkness of the night begins to fade into the grey of the approaching day, the ceremony reaches its climax. At this time all the relatives of the deceased, who are present in the house, assemble in front of the *Mŭn*. The dresses, jewellery and other personal belongings of the dead person, as well as numerous dishes with various foods are placed near the *Mŭn*, who finishes now her incantations and falls into a full trance. Her eyes close, the face becomes ash-gray and mask-like. Suddenly, tears begin to flow from her eyes and the whole body begins to tremble. This is supposed to be the moment at which the spirit of the deceased enters the body of the *Mŭn*, and using the sorceress as a medium, the *Mŭk nyam* begins to speak through her mouth. He tells now to his relatives the cause of his death and expresses his last wishes, while members of the family in their turn frequently ask the deceased, whether he left perhaps any business unsettled in his lifetime, where some of his possessions, which could not be found are hidden, etc. Many of the older Lepchas who witnessed several times the recalling of the *Mŭk nyam*, unanimously state that frequently most surprising occurrences take place during this ceremony. It often happens that somebody dies without having disclosed, where he had hidden his money or jewels, and the relatives were searching in vain for these things. If however this question is put to the *Mŭn* in his trance, she usually answers it without hesitation

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

and then somebody of those present leaves the room immediately to search at the spot now indicated; he mostly returns within a short time with the missing objects.

While the family property is being inherited according to the old Lepcha law, the personal belongings of the dead are distributed among his closer relatives. This is usually carried out by the *Mŭn*, while still possessed by the *Mŭk nyam*. But not always is this way of dividing the heritage regarded as just, and it frequently leads to quarrels.

At the end of this ceremony, a food offering is made to the dead. A cup with some water is handed to the *Mŭn*,—who still remains in the trance —and she sprinkles some of the water on all the food which had been placed in front of her, thus making it "eatable for the deceased". Then all the members of the family step forward one by one and present a dish with food to the spirit and burn also some incense, together with traces of food, and a container filled with Lepcha beer is given to the *Mŭn* to drink. Shortly after this offering the *Mŭk nyam* leaves the body of the *Mŭn*, who soon returns to full consciousness, and then removes the rope from her left hand. Some of the Lepchas claim, that when the *Mŭn* begins to complain of pain—usually in a part of her body, corresponding to those limbs and organs of the deceased, which had been affected by the deadly illness or accident —it has to be regarded as a reliable sign, that the *Mŭk nyam* is about to leave the medium.

After a short interval, the *Mŭn* ties again the rope to her left hand and goes into a light trance, in order to guide the spirit of the dead to the other world. On the way to the *Rŭm lyang*, an obstacle called *Lep*, which is imagined to be like a tremendous waterfall or a deep precipice, has to be crossed by the *Mŭk nyam* with the assistance of the *Mŭn*. Having overcome this barrier, the spirit is met by *The kung tek*,[16] the first *Bong thing*, and his wife *Ne kung ngal*, the first *Mŭn*. They will enumerate to the deceased the line of his ancestors, mentioning on the seventh place the name of the mountain, with which his clan believes itself to be connected,[17] and then they accompany the spirit, to meet *Fă gróng thing* and *Nă zóng nyo*, the ancestors of the Lepchas. In the *Rŭm lyang* the spirits of all, who had died in more recent times, dwell in the form of shadows, while those who died soon after the world had been created, reside here in their bodily form, ready to return to the world should its inhabitants die out.

There are different accounts to be found among the various clans of the Lepchas regarding the way in which the *Mŭk nyam* is supposed to reach the *Rŭm lyang*. The Chronicles of the Maharajas of Sikkim mention a belief of the Sengdenmos, that the spirit goes to

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

the "Place of Gods" via a subterranean passage, the entrance of which is a cave in the vicinity of Monphu, while the Heemos claim, that the spirit enters this way near a rock called Sing Dang, in the vicinity of the village Samdong. A different cave is said to be the entrance for the dead of the Lingsomo clan. This cave is called Dret gang and it lies near the hamlet of Rabdentsi. A legend current among the Namphagmo Lepchas claims that the dead of this clan do not go to Mt Kanchenjunga, but to the Mennam mountain, which is specially sacred to this clan. They reach the mountain through a subterranean passage the entrance of which is the Phim Leb cave near Lingmo.

The funeral ceremonies end on the seventh day after the burial. At first, on the third day some rice, *ci*, and eggs were brought to the grave and after five more days had passed, a hen is sacrificed and then some prayers are said by a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* in order to chase away all malignant spirits and to cleanse the house from all evil once more.

There was no difference between the burial ceremonies of the *Bar fong mo*, the Lepcha aristocracy, and the *A den* or common people, and the dead of both groups were treated alike. Only the funeral rites for a *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* were performed in a different way. Even today, a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* is not cremated, but mostly buried according to the old custom. In his house, the dead person is dressed into the full garment of a Lepcha sorcerer and his face is covered, as customary, with a white cloth and also the coin for *Fă grŏng thing* is placed on his forehead. Around the body, all his magical instruments and drugs are spread out, the latter being kept in flat, closed baskets. Furthermore, a small ladder—"to reach with its help the *Rŭm lyang*"—dried fish and birds, the beak or at least some other part of a crane, the beak of a hornbill and numerous baskets containing various foodstuffs are laid all around the corpse. The body is later placed on a bamboo stretcher, together with all objects enumerated above and carried out by the door,—and not by an opening in the wall or floor, as done at the funeral of a common man. Then the body is carried to the grave and placed in the pit in a sitting position. On the left and right sides of the dead two magical sticks (*ceng pă ting*),[16] as used by the sorcerer during his lifetime, are placed and then also all the various paraphernalia, which had been brought on the stretcher, is laid in the grave.

The rites which follow are just like those performed at the funeral of common people. After the ceremony of calling back the *Mŭk nyam* has been carried out, also the spirit of a deceased *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* is conducted to the *Rŭm lyang*, to join the spirits of his ancestors.

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

13. About Lepcha funeral ceremonies, especially those performed according to Buddhist rites see Gorer, Himalayan village, pp. 345—362. 600

14. The Chronicles of the Maharajas of Sikkim mention a number of different Lepcha clans. Among these the clans called Sengdungmo, Lingsom-mo, Heemo, Karthakmo and the descendants of the Thekong Salung family were of principal importance; other clans are Tugnyeemo (living near Chumthang), Sampa-putso-mo (Namtehn and Tsidam), Targokmo (Rin chenpong), Barmekmo (Barmiok), Namteemo (Namtsi), Mangmungmo (Dentam), Taglongmo (Dallam), Samtrukmo (Samdong), Namphagmo (Namphok) Ratoomo (Rinchenpong), Kabeemo (Tumlong), Phogram-mo and Rungnyogram-mo (Lingthem), Rinyet-rambo (near the source of the Rangeet river), Rathongram-mo (near the source of the Radong river), Ringbit rambho (near the source of the Radong river), Lasogmo (Tashiding and Lasog), Kaleg ram-mo (source of the Kaleg river), Rinagmo (Mangbro), Yogcham-mo (Phensang), Rimpongmo (Rumtek), Nebemo (Dikchu), etc. 618

The Lepcha communities, residing in Ilam (Nepal) were called Rangangmo, Phengbo, Namchamo, Gholingmo, Samdurmo, Kotramo, Sungfungmo, Samlingmo, Lingdam-mo, etc.—The Ilam group of the Lepcha people seems to be of fairly recent origin. According to the historical material available, some 800 Lepcha households, who had taken part in an insurrection against the reigning 7th Maharaja, left Sikkim in 1826 under the leadership of their headmen Dathno, Jerong Denon and the Kazi Gorok, and settled with the assistance of the Nepalese in the province of Ilam.

Two other names should be mentioned here: the *Na ong*, who lived near Dallam in Sikkim, but later died out, and a group of Limbus called Sanyit bho, who were classified as a Lepcha clan. A note on the *Na ong* see also in Kali Kumar Das, The Lepcha People, p. 5.

15. The Ilam Lepchas have a particular custom of keeping those assembled in the house awake during the long vigil. While the *Mun* chants her account, one man—usually somebody who is known as a witty story teller—takes his place in another corner of the house and tries to keep all present awake by telling them jokes and stories. 764 184

16. *The kung tek* and *Ne kung ngal* are said to have been the children of the Lepcha ancestors, *Fa grong thing* and *Na zong nyo*. This first pair of sorcerers is today surrounded by numerous legends, current among the Lepchas. One of these legends tells about their encounter with *Gyad kbum bsags*, the ancestor of the Sikkim Maharajas, who came to obtain their blessing so that sons might be born to him. About the way in which he and his retinue were received by *The kung tek* and his wife, the Chronicles say: "Entering his house they discovered the old man on a raised throne of bamboo. He had washed off the dust and ashes, which had covered his face during his work of clearing the jungle. He had put on his feather cap and the garland of teeth and claws of wild animals, interspersed with various shells and cowries. He sat with a dignified mien, while his wife *Ne kung ngal* was busily engaged in getting food and drink ready. When the strangers entered, a wide bamboo mat was spread on the ground...." *Gyad kbum bsags* received the blessings and returned to his residence in the Chumbi Valley, where in the following years three sons were born to him. Later he went back to Sikkim to offer his thanks to *Thekung tek* and to conclude a pact of friendship with him: "This friendship was cemented by a ceremony, at which several animals, both domestic and wild, were sacrificed and all the local deities invoked to bear witness to this solemn contract of friendship, binding the Lepchas and Tibetans in an inseparable bond. They sat together on the raw hides of animals, entwined the entrails around their bodies, and put their feet together in a vessel filled with blood, thus swearing the blood oath to each other."—This event is also shortly mentioned in Risley, H. H., History of Sikkim, JBTS, Vol. IV., Calcutta 1896. 791

It is possible, that *The kung tek* was a person which once actually lived and which only later became enveloped in legends, as the Chronicles mention—besides a number of descendants, of whom only the names are given—also a certain Lepcha headman, called Tasa Aphong, who was a direct descendant of *The kung tek* and who served under the second Maharaja, *beTsu bsrung rnam rgyal* (ascended the throne in 1670).

17. While the Lepchas in general derive their origin from Mt. Kanchenjunga and its immediate environs, the various clans later on established legendary relations to various mountains, 773

[i.e., during the funeral rites. —Analyst]

114 323 /896/ In this connection, to be sure, I must supplement the assertion concerning the pottery of the Lepcha which is found in G. Gorer's Himalayan Village (London, 1938), p. 67. As is stated in the above work, the generation of Lepchas living today in the reservation of Zongu has no knowledge of the art of pottery. Consequently copper, brass and porcelain pots of Nepalese, Chinese or even Western origin are used in their households; this statement corresponds to the observations I made among some of the Lepchas living outside the reservation. In addition, however, I was also able to find out that only two generations ago the art of pottery was practiced by a few men experienced in this trade, who on their part supplied the other [437] tribe members with the products of their work by way of barter. Their activity, to be sure, seems to have been limited to the manufacture of a type of vessel which was formerly used among the Lepchas. [415] These vessels called Tang ling fyŭ tyók generally had no handle and a short neck, and were rounded out most in the bottom third; at their broadest point they were about 30 centimeters in diameter. They were made of clay without the aid of a potter's wheel and were then baked. A few of these vessels are reputedly in use in a few remote places in Sikkim.

172 ●764 Also, the idea that the potsherds might come from urns or grave goods should not be completely disregarded. Should this assumption prove to be correct, then it is possible that the former settlers were not Lepchas, for insofar as I have been able to ascertain on the basis of my investigations of the old burial practices of the Lepchas, cremation of the dead and disposal of the ashes in urns or the practice of placing jugs containing food in the grave was not customary among the Lepchas. (9)

9. Cf. R. Nebesky de Wojkowitz, "Ancient funeral ceremonies of the Lepchas," Eastern Anthropologist (Lucknow), 5, (1951).

4. Supplement

172 Only a short time after this article had gone to press, I succeeded in obtaining a few of the potsherds discovered in the region of Daramdin. In the majority of cases these were small fragments with edges that had already been greatly worn down. They consisted of clay shot through with mica. They vary according to the

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Bhotanese, and others. Rheumatism is frequent, and inter- 164
mittent fevers, with ague; also violent and often fatal remittents, almost invariably induced by sleeping in the hot valleys, especially at the beginning and end of the rains. The European complaints of liver and bowel disease are all but unknown. Death is regarded with horror. The 761
dead are burnt or buried, sometimes both; much depending 764
on custom and position. Omens are sought in the entrails 787
of fowls, &c., and other vestiges of their savage origin are still preserved, though now gradually disappearing.

The Lepchas profess no religion, though acknowledging 771
the existence of good and bad spirits. To the good they pay no heed; "Why should we?" they say, "the good spirits do us no harm; the evil spirits, who dwell in every rock, grove, and mountain, are constantly at mischief, and to them we must pray, for they hurt us." Every 756
tribe has a priest-doctor; he neither knows nor attempts to practise the healing art, but is a pure exorcist; all [753]
bodily ailments being deemed the operations of devils, who are cast out by prayers and invocations. Still they acknowledge the Lamas to be very holy men, and were the [773]
latter only moderately active, they would soon convert all the Lepchas. Their priests are called "Bijooas:" they profess mendicancy, and seem intermediate between the begging friars of Tibet, whose dress and attributes they assume, and the exorcists of the aboriginal Lepchas: they sing, dance (masked and draped like harlequins), beg, bless, curse, and are merry mountebanks; those that affect [774]
more of the Lama Boodhist carry the "Mani," or revolving praying machine, and wear rosaries and amulets; others again are all tatters and rags. They are often employed to carry messages, and to transact little knaveries. The 756
natives stand in some awe of them, and being besides of a 781

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

it falls down to the earth once again. This is the line of action from lower to the higher. And so it must be that the land of the gods must be below." In this as in other matters we find that there is a varied line of reasoning among the Lepchas.

(e) The Land of Souls

Some Lepchas believe that the souls of the departed go to the country of the ancestors, Ren djong or Mayal. Others say on the contrary that the soul goes to Rum-lyang. It was there before birth ; thither it returns again after death to be born again as a little child in the land of souls. Immediately after death, the soul goes to an intermediate place Sön-lyang, originally called Söm-lon, the leader of souls. The Bong-thing summons it back thence and asks it, at the death ceremony how it died, whether it was through illness or through the magic of wicked men. The soul then comes to the ear of the Bong-thing and gives him this important information. He makes the necessary provisions for the individual soul on the basis of this information. The Mun or Bong-thing then leads the soul to the Rum-lyang and locks it up securely so that it cannot return to its pristine home or relations or cause them any manner of harm. The entire ceremony is performed in the Sang-lion rite. A year after death the Bong-thing goes in a trance to Rum-lyang, opens up the place where the soul had been locked. There he finds a little child. He dresses it up in a child's clothes and releases it to live and grow up among the other ancestors.[51]

According to others there is an intermediate place called Tiamtan, or Sari-rung-dong-chen or Siri-nong-dong-chen.[52] Another place is called Nyo-lyang, the abode of the wicked. There are divergent views about the land of souls, just as there are about the land of gods. An old Mun woman of Git-biyong gave us this pertinent item of information, "We bring the souls of the dead very high up in to the heavens and very near the Supreme God, Ta-she-thing. He it is who has created us, the animals and everything else."

51. cfr. G. Gorer, Himalayan Village, London 1938, p. 353 sq.
52. cfr. Stocks, op. cit. p. 337.

3: Bell G-5 (1904-21) 1928 AJ1 Tibet AJ1
Lepcha AK5

Soon afterwards the house, in which the *chŏ-ten* was kept, fell down. The *chŏ-ten* itself was broken, the corpse was uncovered and went tumbling down the hill-side, four hundred feet, rolling over and over. When the people went to look at it, they were astonished to find that not only was the corpse uninjured, except for a cut near one of the ankles, but that the flesh on the body was as fresh as during the lady's lifetime. They found, too, that it was pure flesh, and not built up with clay, as is the regular practice. The body was carried up the hill again and is encased now in a fresh *chŏ-ten*. All believe this story with the single-minded devotion to their religion that characterizes the Tibetan. They believe also that when the body was placed in the *chŏ-ten*, the cut would gradually heal up, as the lady was 'like a manifestation of the Buddha'.

The religion of the Lepchas of Sikkim resembles in many ways the pre-Buddhist faith of Tibet, known as *Pŏn*. As to their funeral ceremonies the History of Sikkim says:

'When a person dies and a funeral ceremony has to be performed, it is done thus: They sacrifice a bull or cow, a fowl or pig, and believe that this is the present of the deceased to the spirits of his ancestors. For this purpose they slay a pig, and, having pierced the entire length of its body with a sharpened bamboo stake, the *Pŏn-pŏn* recites some prayers or incantations called *Pŏn* for three days and nights.'

The Lepchas believe that their spirits are taken after death through subterranean passages to the local deities of Kinchinjunga [1]—the highest mountain in Sikkim and the third highest in the world—as well as to those of other mountains. Different sub-tribes among the Lepchas have different subterranean passages.

But Buddhism, after the Tibetan pattern, is firm set in Sikkim. And therefore many Lepchas nowadays resort to Buddhist rites. As in Tibet throughout the centuries,

[1] The pronunciation usual among Europeans. The correct pronunciation is *Kang Chen Dzŏ Nga*, 'The Five Treasuries of Great Snow'.

3: Bell G-5 (1904-21) 1928 AJ1 Tibet AJ1
Lepcha AK5

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and as in Mongolia since Sō-nam Gya-tso conducted his campaign of conversion and reform, so in Sikkim also Buddhism is steadily pushing out the older faith. One of my Lepcha servants died, leaving no children, brothers or sisters, but a widow only. The other Lepchas in my employ at once subscribed one rupee each for a lama to perform the funeral ceremonies.

In Tibet there is a funeral hymn, ascribed, as are so many other writings, to King Song-tsen Gam-po. It portrays the sorrows of old age, the pains of death, the four kinds of funeral, the terrors of the Judgement, and ends on a note of repentance. It is too long to quote in full, but I should like to give the three concluding verses. My translation is no doubt a bald one, but it expresses the Tibetan original with fair accuracy.

Gone is all the wealth he gathered, snapped
up by whoever can;
But the sins he gathered in the taking of
that wealth remain.
So by dreadful myrmidons he 's led before the
Lord of Death.
Come thou down, most precious Lama, come and
thy protection give!
From life's endless round
deliver, highest, mightiest Chen-re-si!

Falling down th' abyss into the three grea
Regions of the Damned,
Feeling nothing fixed, but driven like a
feather by the wind,
Powerless along the cliffside path that
down the *Bar-do* runs.
Come thou down, most precious Lama, &c.

Youth with rising powers has passed
regardless of the Holy Faith;
Now in life's declining years I put
aside all slothfulness.
Grant that I may thus go forward steadfast
while this life shall last.